Overview and Goals of Course:

This course reviews research focused on understanding the effect of data collection design features on major types of survey research errors. This is not a “how-to-do-it” course on data collection; the course examines the effects of survey design features on the quality of the data collected. This course is designed to sensitize students to alternative design decisions and their impact on the data obtained from surveys.

The course reviews the major methods and modes of collecting data for surveys. The materials concentrate on the impact data collection methods have on the quality of survey data, especially coverage error, nonresponse error, and measurement error. The review of data collection methods focuses on how basic design features – such as choice of sampling frame, paper versus computer-assisted data collection, and interviewer-administered versus self-administered surveys – relate to key sources of error. The course also considers the impact of mixing modes – such as telephone with in-person modes or web with paper modes – on key sources of survey error.

The course includes a review of the statistical and social science literature on interviewer effects, both in terms of reductions in survey error and contributions to survey error. With respect to nonresponse error, the course reviews current literature on methods for reducing nonresponse error and methods of assessing nonresponse error in survey estimates. Design considerations for longitudinal surveys and surveys of organizations (as opposed to households and individuals) are also considered.

Class Format, Instructor Access, and Course Materials:

This course is taught via a traditional interactive presentation and discussion format in classrooms at the Odum Institute at the University of North Carolina and the Social Science Research Institute at Duke University. The instructor’s office is based in
Research Triangle Park, NC. Office hours are available by appointment and students are encouraged to communicate by e-mail and phone as needed. All presentation slides, student assignments, and course reserves will be posted to the course website on https://sakai.unc.edu/portal: SOCI760.001.FA19.

Evaluation:

All course assignments function as components of a survey data collection proposal to be completed by each student over the semester.

Grading will be specifically based on:

- Participation in class discussion that demonstrates regularly completing the assigned readings will count for 10% of the final grade. The participation portion of the grade will be evaluated by (1) questions students submit prior to class each week and (2) contribution to class discussion. Weekly questions can address any issues covered through the prior week’s class and should be submitted to the instructor via e-mail by 2:00 pm each Monday prior to class. The instructor will select a few questions each week to discuss during the first few minutes of each class and answers others during the class.

- Three assignments of about 4-6 pages each will be designed to sequentially develop a proposal for a survey data collection project will count for 20% of the final, or a total of 60% of the final grade.

- A final proposal for a survey data collection project addressing instructor feedback on the three assignments and the most important sources of survey error for the proposed data collection will count for 30% of the final grade.

The schedule below indicates dates when the assignments will be available to students and when they will need to be completed and submitted. Assignments should be submitted to the instructor via Sakai or e-mail; the instructor will confirm receipt via e-mail. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior arrangement with the instructor.

Text and Readings:

The only text for this course is:


Multiple chapters from this book will be assigned as weekly readings. These chapters are marked with an asterisk (*) in the course schedule below and will not be included with the reserved readings made available to the class. Copies of all other additional readings can be accessed through the course website.
Course Schedule, Topics, and Readings:

**Week 1 – August 27**
**Topics:**
Overview; Goals, concepts, and challenges
**Readings:**
**Instructor Site:** UNC

**Week 2 – September 3**
**Topic:**
Key dimensions of survey modes
**Readings:**
**Instructor Site:** Duke

**Week 3 – September 10**
**Topics:**
Comparing modes, mixing modes, and responsive design
**Readings:**
**Instructor Site:** UNC

**Week 4 – September 17 (Assignment 1 posted)**
**Topic:**
Survey modes and survey errors, case study
**Readings:**
**Instructor Site:** Duke
**Week 5 – September 24**

**Topic:**
Computer-assisted survey methods, self-interviewing

**Readings:**

**Instructor Site:** UNC

**Week 6 – October 1 (Assignment 1 due)**

**Topic:**
Web surveys, future of survey technologies

**Readings:**

**Instructor Site:** UNC

**Week 7 – October 8 (Assignment 2 posted)**

**NO CLASS MEETING – Duke fall break**

**Week 8 – October 15**

**Topics:**
Respondent selection procedures, proxy reporters

**Readings:**

**Instructor Site:** Duke

**Week 9 – October 22 (Assignment 2 due)**

**Topics:**
Interviewer effects, interviewer training

**Readings:**

**Instructor Site:** UNC
Week 10 – October 29
Topics:
Interviewer quality control, interviewing techniques
Readings:
(1) Li, J., Brick, M., Tran, B., and Singer, P. (2011) Using statistical models for sample
Instructor Site: UNC

Week 11 – November 5 (Assignment 3 posted)
Topics:
Nonresponse definition, trends and consequences
Readings:
(2) Groves, R. (2006). Nonresponse rates and nonresponse bias in household surveys.”
Public Opinion Quarterly 70: 646–675 (special issue).
Instructor Site: Duke

Week 12 – November 12
Topics:
Nonresponse theories, actions, and assessment
Readings:
level correlates to evaluate nonresponse effects in a telephone survey. Public Opinion
Quarterly 70: 704–719.
Instructor Site: UNC

Week 13 – November 19 (Assignment 3 due)
Topic:
Longitudinal surveys
Readings:
Instructor Site: Duke

Week 14 – November 26 (Final assignment posted)
NO CLASS MEETING – Thanksgiving week
Week 15 – December 3
Topic: Surveys of organizations
Readings:
Instructor Site: UNC

Monday, December 9 – Final proposals due by 5:00 pm